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ALL ABOUT “KEGELS” (FOR WOMEN)

These exercises were originally developed by Dr. Arnold Kegel (Kay-gill) to help women with problems controlling urination. They are designed to strengthen and give you voluntary control of a muscle called Pubococcygeus (pew-bo-kak-sa-gee-us), or P.C. for short. The P.C. muscle is part of the sling of muscle stretching from your pubic bone in front to your tailbone in back. Since the muscle encircles not only the urinary opening but also the outside of the vagina, some of Dr. Kegel's patients found that doing the exercises had a pleasant side effect – increased sexual awareness.

WHY DO KEGEL EXERCISES?

Learning Kegel Exercises.

Can help you be more aware of feelings in your genital area.

Can increase circulation in the genital area.

May help increase sexual arousal started by other kind(s) of stimulation.

Can be helpful after childbirth to restore muscle tone in the vagina.

IDENTIFYING THE P.C. MUSCLE

Sit on the toilet. Spread your legs apart. See if you can stop and start the flow of urine without moving your legs. That is your P.C. muscle, the one that turns the flow on and off.

If you don't find it the first time, do not give up; try again the next time you have to urinate.

THE EXERCISES

Slow Kegel: Tighten the P.C. muscle as you did to stop the flow of urine. Hold it for a slow count of three. Relax it.

Quick Kegel: Tighten and relax the P.C. muscle as rapidly as you can.

Pull-in - Push-out: Pull up the entire pelvic floor as though trying to suck water into your vagina. Then push out or bear down as if trying to push the imaginary water out. (This exercise will use a number of “stomach” or “abdominal” muscles as well as the P.C. muscle).

At first do ten of each of these exercises (one “set”) five times every day. Each week increase the number of times you do exercising by five (15, 20, 25, etc) Keep doing five “sets” each day.

You can do these exercises any time during daily activities which do not require a lot of moving around: driving your car, watching television, doing dishes, sitting in school, standing at the “check-out”, lying in bed, talking on the telephone or sitting at your desk.

When you start you will probably notice that the muscle does not want to stay “contracted” during the “Slow Kegel” and that you can not do the “Quick Kegel” very fast or evenly. Keep at it. In a week or two you will probably notice that you can control it quite well. Sometimes the muscle will start to feel a little tired. Not surprisingly. You probably have not used it very much before. Take a few seconds rest and start again. A good way to check on how you are doing is to insert one or two lubricated fingers into your vagina, try tightening up and see how well you feel this muscle tighten.

Remember to keep breathing naturally and evenly while you are doing Kegels!

Human Sexuality Program UCSF